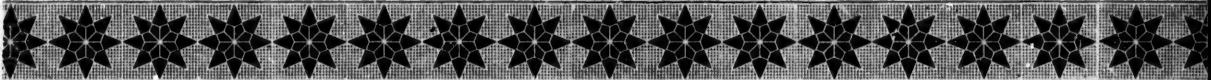


13



JOINT LETTER

OF

The Archbishop and Bishops

OF THE

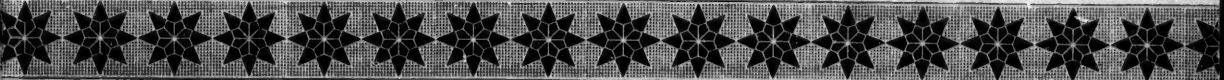
ECCLESIASTICAL PROVINCE OF HALIFAX,

Announcing the Suppression by the Holy
See of Certain Holidays.



1893.

Halifax Printing Co., 161 Hollis St.



1893
(94)

114545

**THE ARCHBISHOP AND BISHOPS OF THE ECCLESIAS-
TICAL PROVINCE OF HALIFAX.**

To the Clergy, Religious Orders and Laity of the Province:

Health and Benediction in the Lord.

DEARLY BELOVED :

The duty of worshipping God our Creator is founded in the very essence of man as a being dependent, both for his life and its preservation, on the Supreme Being, from whom all paternity is named in heaven and on earth. The voice of nature speaking in all ages to the souls of men, has ever inculcated this duty ; it has ever taught mankind that prayer and sacrifice, praise and thanksgiving, are to be offered to the Lord. It ever proclaims that the same omnipotent hand that framed the Universe held all the forces thereof within its palm, and guided them gently, but strongly, to a predetermined end. It makes clear to the thoughtful that not only were the results of physical forces known to God, but also all the free acts of man, and that he could at will make physical laws subservient to the higher Moral Order in which he placed the human race.

The teachings of this voice of nature were confirmed on Mount Sinai when Moses received from the Lord, and promulgated to the Israelites, the Law of the Old Testament. The essential duty of worshipping the Creator was not changed ; but its obligations were more fully unfolded, and days and seasons, in keeping with the needs of the Jewish Nation, and in harmony with their mode of life, were assigned for its public exercise. It must be borne in mind that the duty of adoration arises from the very nature of God and man's relation to him, whilst the assignment of the day, or the season, for its outward manifestation, was but a ceremonial observance which was to end when the Old Testament should be succeeded by the New.

Hence when the fulness of Divine Revelation had come, and the Law of Love had replaced the Law of Fear, the ceremonial yoke was broken, and the Children of God were henceforth to serve their Creator in the liberty of the Christian Dispensation. The duty of worship, of course, remained, but its outward public fulfillment amongst Christians was for all future time to be guided and directed by the Church. Instituted for all ages and not, like the Synagogue, for an epoch ; intended not for a nation merely, but for all the tribes of the earth, the Church was endowed with a plenitude of spiritual power, and guaranteed an immunity from doctrinal error. Amongst the first acts of the Church was the institution of the Christian Sunday, with its freedom from the ceremonial bondage of the Jewish Sabbath. The bonds of sin had been broken by the

expiation on Mount Calvary, the figures and types of the Old Law had received their fulfillment; the age of servitude had been replaced by the fulness of heirship, and men regenerated into the Church were no longer servants but Children of God. Not then from the dead formal observances of the Jewish law, but from the loving freedom of the Gospel dispensation, as laid down and defined by its one authorized interpreter, the Church, is the character of the Christian Sunday to be estimated and its obligations and restrictions measured. Instituted by the Church primarily to enable men to publicly worship God, assistance on that day at the one Supreme act of Religion, the Mass, has been made obligatory, whenever possible. A secondary end of the Sunday was to ensure rest of body and recreation of mind.

We must ever remember the Church is no mere abstraction; she is a living active society, or body, divine in her origin, in her graces and her powers, but human in her members and her sympathies. Hence, whilst seeking the spiritual good of man, she is not unmindful of his temporal needs, nor negligent in endeavoring to develop, and to train to higher aspirations, his intellectual qualities. Hence, in ruder ages, when the toiling masses had few joys and few opportunities for recreation, she instituted various feast days, the observance of which she made of equal obligation with that of the Sunday. Through these Holidays God was glorified, some mystery of Religion, or the virtues of some Saints were commemorated, and the overworked

serf had a respite from labor and an opportunity for innocent recreation and mental uplifting. The Holidays of the Church were for many ages the only bright rest-spots along the rugged pathway of the weary labourer.

Within the present century the industrial and social conditions of life have been wonderfully changed. The hard manual tasks of the past are now done by machinery ; the hours of labor are shortened, and various public holidays are enjoyed by all. Again, men no longer work single handed ; they are grouped in factories, or mills, or mines, or employed on railroads or steamers, in each and all of which cases there is such an interdependence of labour that a serious disarrangement would ensue were a few, or even one, to be absent from his post. Hence the Holidays of the Church, whilst not so needful as in the past, for the physical rest of man, are, in some instances, to his temporal disadvantage. In this changed condition of life the Church, seeking as ever the best interests of her children, abolishes, when and where it seems desirable, the obligation of abstaining from servile works on certain holidays. In this she shows herself equally the benign mother to-day as when she instituted, for the relief of her children, these same Festivals.

The Archbishop and Bishops of this Ecclesiastical Province, having regard to the industrial conditions that obtain in our midst, deemed it desirable to petition the Holy See to remove from the faithful the obligation of abstaining from servile works, and of hearing Mass on certain days hitherto kept holy. By Rescript of 14th

September, 1893, the Supreme Pontiff has been graciously pleased to relieve henceforth the Catholics of this Ecclesiastical Province from the obligation of abstaining from servile works on the Feast of the Annunciation, Ascension Thursday, Corpus Christi, and the Feast of Saint Peter and Paul. Regarding the obligation of assisting at Mass on the aforementioned days, as well as on the Feast of St. Patrick for the Diocese of Halifax, the Holy Father has left it to the Bishops to enjoin either the hearing of Mass, or the recitation of some prayer in lieu thereof.

The undersigned Archbishop and Bishops, while earnestly exhorting their respective flocks to assist at an early Mass when convenient on those days, do not impose it as of obligation. They make it, however, binding on the conscience of those who do not assist at the Divine Sacrifice, to recite a third part of the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin instead. The various members of a household may satisfy this obligation by reciting the Rosary in common. Indeed this method is most strongly recommended. Pastors are requested to carefully explain this obligation to their people, to remind them of it on the Sundays preceding the suppressed Feasts, and to impress it on the children when preparing them for first Communion and Confirmation.

This Letter shall be read in every Church of the Ecclesiastical Province of Halifax on the first Sunday after its reception that the Pastor shall officiate therein.

The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you, Brethren.

✠ C. O'BRIEN,
Archbishop of Halifax.

J. SWEENEY,
Bishop of St. John.

JAMES ROGERS,
Bishop of Chatham.

JOHN CAMERON,
Bishop of Antigonish.

JAMES C. McDONALD,
Bishop of Charlottetown.

HALIFAX.

Feast of the Presentation of our Blessed Lady, 1893.